My Summer on the Farm

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By

Mary A. Swift

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When I spent my summer on the farm.

MY SUMMER ON THE FARM

BY

MARY A. SWIFT

DELIGHTFULLY ILLUSTRATED

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MARY A. SWIFT.

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TO

PAULINE WOOD SWIFT

This Little Book

Is Lovingly Inscribed.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

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MY SUMMER ON THE FARM

When I found that I could leave the hot city and go to my cousin's on the farm I was very happy. Packing my little trunk with a few pretty muslin dresses, my sun hat and my canvas slippers, I found in a day's time I was ready for the journey. My mother came to the train with me, bought my ticket, and saw me off.

The train was filled with people going for their Summer outing, not one more happy than I. As we left the city I began to see so many beautiful sights, and at last reached the little town, where my cousin met me with a white pony and what she called a buckboard.

After putting my little trunk on the

buckboard we started for the farm. And such a delightful drive up and down hills, over little ridges, and through little groves of trees where the birds were singing their joyous notes!

At last we came to my cousin's home, a white house with maple trees around it and an orchard wide, a well with its moss-grown bucket fastened with iron and near it a trough for the horses, and on the north were the red barns, with large doors that rolled back so we could drive in without getting off the buckboard.

As we were going in the house Cousin said, "I hope you will enjoy your dinner." I assure you I did enjoy it, for I only had a lunch on the train that my mother put in the box for me. Such a lovely dinner

AUNT KATE.

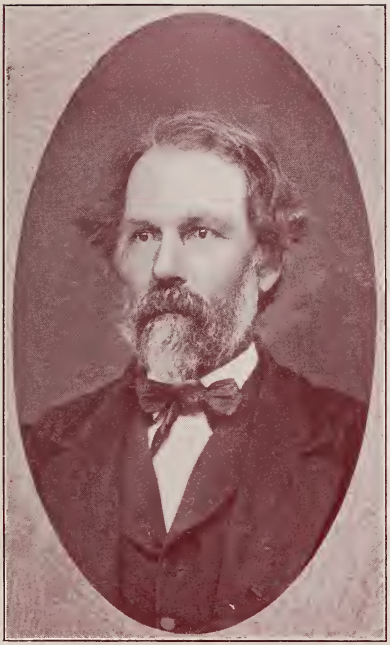
as Aunt Kate had! The table had a snow-white cover, and the dark-blue china that had pictures of old churches, trees and lakes.

I had never seen anything so pretty. After a bountiful dinner we went in Cousin's front room, where Cousin played on an organ and Uncle Jack sang songs. Then she took me into her library. There she had books, stuffed birds, a bird of paradise, a magpie, the eared owl, a golden eagle and a king vulture. I thought how much nicer it was there, so cool and quiet, than it was in a busy, hot city.

Aunt Kate said she wanted me to get a good night's rest, as there was to be a Sabbath school picnic the next day. She gave me a little room looking out on the

flower garden. The sweet peas were all in blossom, and the perfume from them was so sweet.

Waking in the morning from a peaceful sleep, I was ready for the picnic. There came a team with a hay wagon, with a rack and seats all around it, to take the children to the grove. The seats were all taken by the little boys and girls, and they all had lunch baskets, with dainty cakes, cookies and sandwiches. Upon reaching the grove we found long tables ready for all the dainties, and swings hanging in the trees. There was an old stump where they had built stones around so as to make a fire. We picked up branches and sticks for a fire. Then they took a pail and went to the brook for



UNCLE JACK.

water. Aunt Kate put in the coffee and hung the pail on a stick over the fire. In a few minutes a pail of lovely coffee was ready, and we all gathered around the table to enjoy a fine lunch. Then we gathered up all the dishes and put them in our baskets, and were ready for the swings and croquet. Some of the boys took their shoes off and waded the brook. Harry Atchison found a snake by the water, put it on a stick, and scared us girls almost to death. After a day's enjoyment we all took our seats in the hay wagon for home.

The next morning we made nets to catch butterflies. And such fun! We caught white ones, yellow and black ones, all-black ones and all-yellow ones. We had about twenty in a glass.

My Summer on the Farm.

If you could look in Cousin's yard this morning and see the wheelbarrow with the loveliest peacock sitting on it with his tail spread with rainbow colors. Its head is a blue and red; tail dark green, light green, red and blue. And the dogs. My cousin has a Newfoundland and a Shepherd. They are trained so they will draw sledges and little carriages. On that account they are highly esteemed. The Newfoundland is well known as a most faithful guardian of its master's property. It is very fond of water; will fetch out any article that its master indicates and lay it at his feet. Many instances are known of it saving lives of people who had fallen into water. The Shepherd dog is a rough, shaggy animal, with sharp-pointed ears

MY COUSIN.

and nose. It understands every look and gesture of its beloved master, and will drive the flock to any place which he points out.

Uncle Jack has twenty cows. He always sends Sport, the Shepherd dog, to the pasture for them. He will get them all without anyone going with him.

Uncle Jack takes the milk every morning on an old cart to the factory where they make the milk into cheese. They first make it into cheese curd, then put it in a big hoop for a day; then it comes out of the hoop a round, solid cheese.

Uncle Jack keeps two men working on the farm, hoeing potatoes and corn, and all kinds of work. They are going to commence haying, and Uncle said if Cousin

and I will help rake after the cart that after haying he will take us to the woods to his camp, and perhaps we might see a deer. Cousin and I said we would be very glad. We did, and it was fun. I had a long-handled rake and so did Cousin. One man was on the cart and the other pitched on the hay. We would gather up what he could not get on his fork. They would get a load, and then the man would help us on and we would ride to the barn. After a few days the haying was done, and Uncle said: "Now, girls, I will take you to the woods." He took bread, potatoes, bacon, beans and butter, for he said we would go to his camp and he would do the cooking. So we took the white horse and buckboard and started. Drove over hills, stones and

The Old Farmhouse.

stumps. I never saw anything so bad as the roads all through the woods. At last we reached Uncle's camp, a little log house covered with bark. The door was locked. There was an old padlock hanging to the door. Uncle took from his pocket a big brass key and unlocked it. We went in. There was an old rusty stove, a crossed-leg table and four old chairs, some old iron kettles, tin plates, steel knives and tin spoons. There was a cupboard and it fastened with a wooden button.

Uncle Jack chopped down a tree, split it up, and we helped carry in some wood. Uncle started a fire, put on the kettle with water, and soon had some potatoes ready for it; fried bacon, made coffee, and we had a nice dinner.

After dinner Uncle took his paddle and canoe down to the river. We went up the winding river for two miles. Uncle said, "Keep very still, and perhaps we will see a deer." We came floating down as still, and just on a bank where there was deep grass, what do you think? There stood a handsome red deer or stag with lovely horns. But as soon as he saw us he took one leap out of sight. He gave a blow that sounded like a horse.

Our first night in the camp was glorious in its slumbers. Hemlock feathers for beds, blankets and mosquito bars made us entirely comfortable, and the deep stillness soothed us more gently than music itself and utter forgetfulness of all the fatigues of our journey.

When "breakfast" was shouted in our camp we were up and dressed. We had a wash-basin, a piece of soap on a chip, a towel on a limb, and a pocket comb, and in a twinkling our toilet was made.

One day Uncle said he would go up in the woods and see what he could get. He wasn't gone long before we heard the report of a gun, and soon saw Uncle coming with a fine buck on his back that he had shot. He put a pole on the corner of the camp, and soon had the buck hung up; then dressed it, and for the rest of the time we were in camp we had delicious venison to eat. Every night Uncle had a campfire built of brush. We sat and watched the sparks fly in the air. The reflection of the light on the little river was

as pretty as any fireworks I had ever seen at home. And on a cedar tree not far from us sat an owl. Every few minutes it would call out, "Hoo, hoo! Hoo, hoo!" Uncle would answer, and it came nearer and nearer until we could see it. It has a large body and a big head, little ears and large eyes; can see at night, but blind in daylight. We could hear the whippoorwill.

After a week's fun Uncle said we would have to go home. We locked up everything and started through the woods, drove over stumps and stones, and at last reached home.

Aunt Kate was glad to see us. She said Uncle had come in time to make a coop for the chickens. I ran to the barn to see them. There were twelve downy

The Red Barn.

little things that looked just like little canary birds. There were also ducks that looked just like little brown bugs around trying to catch flies. We were all tired after our long drive, and were glad to go to our rooms for the night.

Waking in the morning with the bright sun shining in my room, I was made happy by hearing Aunt Kate's sweet voice calling us to breakfast. After breakfast we took our little pails and went a-berrying. Came home and had a delightful lunch under an apple tree whose broad branches swept the ground on all sides of us.

Cousin sent a small boy to dig worms, and she brought out two fish rods, announcing that she and I would furnish

trout for dinner the next day. The small boy was ready to carry my worms, bait my hook and take off my fish and carry them for me, for I never could bring myself to carry worms or fish; they squirm so. The brook on my cousin's farm runs with a gentle slope, here and there a little fall, cornerwise of a large pasture. A smaller brook, which joins it below the pasture, winds in a zigzag course through a flat meadow, and has scarcely a fall or ripple in its whole length, and is not more than two or three feet wide. Having my choice of fishing grounds, the larger brook, with its little songs over the pebbles and with no tall grass where snakes could hide, was my choice. The small boy thought it best to start at a clump of alders and fish down

Boy and Dog.

the brook, as he said, "Mamma catches ten or fourteen down through here, and that will be enough for you and me." Just below the alders the water flowed over a large flat rock and fell about a foot into a basin, and here I felt sure my first fish was just waiting for the hook. The small boy put the fattest, most squirmy worm on my hook, and in I let it drop. Something seemed to grab it and pull it under the stone, but when I pulled up my line there was nothing but the worm on the hook. I tried again and again, with the same result, and finally concluded it must be the current and not a fish drawing my hook down the stream.

A little way off an old elm, whose roots on one side of the stream had washed bare,

beckoned to me with its long arms. Here my hook scarcely reached the water when it was snatched by just the loveliest speckled beauty, that looked a foot or more long in the water, but was only about eight inches.

From there down my hook only caught between stones and on alders, and not another fish, and in half an hour I was tired of it; so the small boy took my rod, and, with my beautiful trout on a stringer, we went to find my cousin.

Climbing a near-by hill, we could look down on the meadow, with its waving grass. The tall maple woods beyond cast a shadow half-way across it, and the little thread of a brook ran up to the woods and then ran away again, out almost to the

edge of the shadow, as if trying to reach the sunlight.

Cousin stood about half-way down the brook, knee-deep in the grass, and so intent on her fishing she did not see us or appear to notice three blackbirds that circled, screaming, around her. The small boy ran down and called her away.

When her fish were strung with mine there were nineteen trout, as near of a size as if someone had cut them all by the same measure. Standing together on the hill-top, Cousin looks back and, with the love-light of Nature brightening her face, quotes:

"By groves made green from that bright streamlet's wave;
Soft are its slopes and cool its fragrant shades."

"And holy all the spirit of the spot. Unto this time only the streams and sloping lawns and gentle aid abide unchanged."

As Uncle and I were walking one day we saw a green lizard. He was a bright-eyed little creature, a foot in length, and was basking in the sun. Uncle said they deposited fourteen or fifteen eggs in the sand, they are hatched by the heat of the sun, and the young immediately lead an independent life.

I saw grass snakes. Uncle said they were harmless, and that they lived on frogs, mice and young birds. He said they shed their entire skins several times during the year, even the covering of their

L. of C.

"Beside the still waters."

eyes: a rent opens in the neck, and the snake will entangle itself in thick grass or brush and creep out of its skin, turning it wrong side out.

As we sit on the lawn evenings we see the glow-worms shedding their pale-green lights; and the musk beetle, which is a large insect, and when touched it emits a curious sound, not unlike a bat, but more resembling the scratching of a slate pencil when held perpendicular.

Uncle has a great many bees, and such useful little creatures! I would sit and see them work as they flew from flower to flower and to the sweet clover, and then would fly to their hives, where they stored the sweetness of the flowers. There was plenty of honey for the table, and it was

delicious. One night in the clear honey on my plate there were some cells that had a dark-brown substance in them which Uncle said was bee bread; that it was the pollen of flowers that the bees gathered on their legs.

The young people wanted to have a lawn party, and thought Uncle Jack's lawn the nicest place; so Aunt Kate said we could have it there. There were George Thomas, Fred Hays, Clarence and Harlow Christy, Richard Story, Lincoln Grayson, Fletcher Beaumont, Fred Strafford, John Stout, Jack Howard and Tommy Tucker. The girls were Lizzie Kimbal, Margaret Dow, Mary Grayson, Grace Tucker, Florence Chase, Hattie Bump, Sadie Nichols, Blanche Willis, Maude Max, Cousin, and myself.

"We had venison to eat in our camp."

We worked all day arranging everything for the evening, strung lanterns in the trees, made seats all around the yard, and hung hammocks, put up two tents, and made a platform where we could dance. Uncle hired old John Maxfield to come with his fiddle.

Night came, and such a happy crowd! All the girls in their pink, blue and white dresses. The boys all looked nice. John Maxfield took his chair on the platform. The boys called for a quadrille. Fred Strafford and I led the dance. If you could have heard the echo of John Maxfield's voice when he called out, "All hands round!" We danced until 10 o'clock. Then the boys took the girls to supper. The children's mothers furnished it, and

were there to wait upon us. They had raised biscuits, roll jelly cake, and a pyramid cake in the center of the table with twenty-three lighted candles, cup cakes, with all colored candies, cold chicken, and lemonade. It was a delightful night for us all, with the beautiful moon shining over us.

At 12 o'clock we said good-night and thanked our kind people for giving us such a delightful time.

There was to be a circus in a village nine miles from Uncle's. Cousin and I wanted to go. Uncle said we had been good girls all Summer, and he would take us. Such a time driving there! There were as many as twenty teams, all hurrying to get to the village. Some were run-

ning their horses, so we had to drive in the ditches and do everything to keep from being run over. I wished we had stayed at home, but finally we got there without an accident.

As we drove into the village they were having their parade. There was a wagon with a band sitting on top playing. Then followed a wagon with a large leopard in a cage, another with a tiger, and then a man with a black bear, a cage with a gorilla and little ones, a cage of lions, and a cage of Angora cats. Then followed a man with a group of dogs, then a cage with a wolf, a cage with a grizzly bear; then followed a man with an African elephant, a cage with cockatoos; and then followed little ponies and a steam piano.

It was a lively time on the street. Just a crowd of old men, women and children. They went to the tent and the crowd followed. In the tent they had three rings. Some were performing on bars. There were elephants with clowns trying to jump over them, chariot races, dogs jumping through hoops, ladies riding on running horses. They had a side show, with a lady with big snakes wound around her neck, and a cage of monkeys. A tent with long-haired girls and the little dwarfs; the woman who lifts the heavy weights. A tent with ostriches, a tent where they were telling fortunes—side shows of all kinds. There was so much noise and confusion that we were glad to go home.

September came and the county fair,

Coming Home from the Camp.

and such a display of fine cattle and horses, all kinds of fowls, all kinds of carriages and working utensils. There was the Floral Hall, with all kinds of fancy work, paintings, flowers and household products. On the grounds were the "merry-go-rounds," shooting gallery and dance hall. Then on the track they had horse racing, baseball, football, balloon ascensions. On the grounds were dining-halls, stands of fruit, and photograph galleries. Everything is going on at once—a perfect museum. We bought what they called a squeaker, had our pictures taken, and rode on the "merry-go-round."

After watching the horse races and the balloon ascension Uncle said we would have to go home. On reaching home we

found a letter from my mother saying I would have to come home next week, for school was going to commence in two weeks. As much as I want to see my mother, it makes me feel sad to leave my uncle and aunt and cousin and all the young people who had given me such a lovely time.

On Monday my trunk was packed and Cousin took me to the train. Aunt Kate said Cousin could come and see me Christmas-time.

Let me say to my little friends there is nothing so fine as spending a Summer in the country.

Our Dog.

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